
A Critical Analysis of Teaching Methods and Academic Performance of Students in Social Studies: A Case Study of Selected High Schools in California

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ABSTRACT

This study was to critically analyze the teaching methods and academic performance of high school students in social studies in California. The research design for this study is an experimental type. The area of this study was within the confines of California. The population of the study consists of all social studies teachers and high school students in California. The respondents in the study consisted of 12 social studies teachers and 240 students. These were obtained through the simple random sampling method, which was used in randomly selecting 2 teachers and 40 students from each of the 6 schools selected for use in the study. The researcher will develop one instrument tagged "Teaching Methods and Academic Performance Inventory" (TMAPI). The instrument was face and content validated, which was done by the researcher's supervisor. One expert from test, measurement, and evaluation also helped in validating the instrument. A Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument (TMAPI), using 30 respondents who did not form part of the main study were randomly selected and the instrument administered to them. Data collected from the respondents was subjected to a reliability test, and it produced a reliability coefficient of 0.84 to 0.94. The study concluded that education is the most significant treasure that society requires to deal with its changing nature. The teaching of students at school is so methodical that the proper procedures are followed in order to achieve the anticipated goals. However, the teacher's competence includes the following: an understanding of learners' developmental and learning problems; classroom management; adequate knowledge of the subject matter and curriculum goals; use of instructional methods, techniques, and materials; improvement of instructional strategies to meet the changing demands of learners for occupational knowledge and efficiency; and citizenship preparation. One of the recommendations made was that students should be encouraged to make personal discovery by being exposed to discovery method of teaching.

KEYWORDS: Academic Performance, Students, Social Studies, Lecture, Field Trip and Discussion Method

Introduction

Education, by its nature, makes knowledge possible, which is undoubtedly important to affecting the needs of society. Therefore, the measurable success of

every human endeavour comes as a result of the formal type of education as its paramount. Education is the most important treasure needed by society to cope with its dynamic nature (Ademulegun, 2001). This formal type of education is affected by some form of teaching. In the act of teaching, there are two parties involved (the teacher and the learner) who work together on the subject matter. Teaching necessitates knowledge of subject matter, methods, techniques, and teaching materials that can be used to make instruction interesting and effective. This, in fact, is the main objective of education, toward which learners are to be helped to grow socially, intellectually, and emotionally. Teaching is never an easy endeavor, as many "teachers" think (Akkaya, 2009). It involves teachers' competence in understanding of learners' developmental and learning problems; classroom management; adequate knowledge of the subject-matter and aims of the curriculum; use of instructional methods, techniques, and materials; improvement of instructional strategies to meet the changing demands of learners for occupational knowledge and efficiency; and preparation for citizenship.

The education of learners in the school is so systematic that due process is followed to affect the objectives that have been in anticipation. The subjects taught in schools constitute the curriculum content (Bodrova & Leong, 2006). Learning experiences are derived from the curriculum contents with the use of appropriate methods in the process of imparting knowledge to the learners, which brings about a change in behavior, attitudes, and values. To achieve this, different methods must be used in teaching each of these subjects to realise the learning experiences that would result in giving society its demands. According to Akkaya (2009), most methods adopted in teaching are no longer commensurate with the demands of current educational objectives. This has contributed to the failure of many teachers in the classroom, while learners, too, become confused and dropout. The overall effect of the inadequate preparation of teachers for their professional calling is the "falling standard" in education in many developing countries like Nigeria. Bandura (1971) opines that people can be influenced to change through the use of effective strategies; how to teach, that is, how to involve teaching methods and materials to bring about changes in learners' behavior. The common implication of those facts is that the teacher should use different teaching strategies that match the objectives of teaching and learners' learning styles and personality dimensions.

Statement of the Problem

It is an undisputed fact that every learner is expected to enjoy effective learning for the purpose of promoting good academic performance on the part of the students. It is also a fact that no good academic performance can be derived in the absence of good teaching strategies that motivate students to learn. It is quite certain that most of the time, some teachers do not exhibit teaching strategies that motivate students to high academic performance. For instance, it is not uncommon to find some teachers teaching students with the lecture method most of the time, especially when it is not necessary and would deprive them of other teaching methods such as discussion, field trips, etc., which are interesting and motivational to the students. On this note, this study was carried out in order to explore each of the aforementioned teaching methods in order to find out their level of effectiveness and to find the ones that are more effective in teaching students' social studies in high schools in California with respect to their academic achievement in the subject.

Objective of the Study

1. To find out the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies taught with lecture or discussion method.
2. To examine the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies using field trip or discussion method.

Research Questions

1. What is the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies taught with lecture or discussion method?
2. To examine the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with field trip or discussion method?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with lecture or discussion method.
2. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with field trip or discussion method.

Lecture Method and Students' Academic Achievement

According to Sutherland (1976), teaching in the modern university is heavily oriented toward the lecture; in fact, we can say it is without doubt the most important formal teaching method used. The lecture method can loosely be defined as the continuing oral presentation of information and ideas by the professor; it is presumably a synthesis of his own reading, research, and experience, interpreted in light of his own insights. Otherwise defined, it is a teaching method where an instructor is the central focus of information transfer. Typically, an instructor will stand before a class of students and present information for the students to learn. Sometimes, they will write on a board or use an overhead projector to provide visuals for students. Students are expected to take notes while listening to the lecture. Usually, very little exchange occurs between the instructor and the students during a lecture. In a close observation, it appears that it is the transferring of the notes from the teacher to the notebooks of the students without passing through the minds of either. According to the National Teachers' Institute (2000), the word "lecture" is derived from "legere," a Latin word which means "to give a formal talk prepared and organised in advance."

Obviously, therefore, the use of the method involves the teacher in preparing his lecture notes for use as he teaches the whole class. He delivered his prepared body of information with little or no interruption. Students take down notes or copy the teacher's notes at the end of the lecture. At the end of the lecture, a few questions may be asked to clarify a few doubts or confusions. Eddie in Ekanem (2004) further explains that the lecture method is, to a very large extent, the traditional method of teaching adults. It is autocratic in form and style. Superficially, it might seem that a lecture is the easiest teaching strategy to describe and define since the lecturer's role is apparently to transmit information. He quoted Obanga as saying that a lecture is usually an exposition. The lecturer tells his students what he thinks they should

know. The lecturer may use any combination of cuttings from what well-known authors have written on the topic of the lecture; expressing the lecturer's own opinions; demonstrating how something works; or stating arguments in favour of and against a particular preposition.

Field Trip Method and Students' Academic Achievement:

A field trip can be defined as any teaching and learning excursion outside of the classroom. It is a visit to a place or places outside the regular classroom which is designed to achieve certain objectives which cannot be achieved as well by using other means. Balogun (1981), explains that field trips are undertaken in order to see practically what has been taught in theory or to let pupils actually discover things by seeing, touching, feeling, smelling, or even tasting them. He further explains that on a field trip, the teacher takes his pupils out of the classroom to the scene where what he wants the pupils to learn about can be observed closely. He carefully prepared the pupils beforehand, so that they would take note of the various aspects of the topic he wanted them to learn. They then go back to the classroom or assemble somewhere else with the teacher to discuss what they have seen. Eddie in Ekanem (2004) further expatiates that it is an excursion taken outside the classroom for the purpose of making relevant observations for the purpose of obtaining some specific information.

He further observes that, if properly planned, it affords the students the opportunity to become actively engaged in observing, studying relationships, and manipulating objects. The advantages of this method, according to Ekanem (1988), are: It satisfies children's interests and curiosity. It offers them a new learning environment other than the classroom. It helps children see things for themselves. It offers pupils an opportunity to get first-hand information. It makes use of more senses of learning. It makes impressive marks in the memories of the pupils and facilitates a recall. On the other hand, the demerits of this method according to the National Teachers' Institute (2000) are that if not well planned, pupils might be confused in their observations. It has to be timed. It could lead to idleness among pupils without proper direction.

Discussion Method and Students' Academic Achievement:

According to William Ewens in Goldsmid and Wilson (1980), the term "discussion" usually refers to a diverse body of teaching techniques that emphasize participation, dialogue, and two-way communication. The discussion method is one in which the instructor and a group of students consider a topic, issue, or problem and exchange information, experience, ideas, opinions, reactions, and conclusions with one another. There are a variety of ways to stimulate discussion. The use of the discussion method is to make students formulate applications of abstract principles, gain practice in logic and thinking, give prompt feedback, and develop an appetite for further learning. Compared with the traditional lecture method, discussion elicits higher levels of reflective thinking and creative problem solving, including synthesis, application, and evaluation. Obviously, a successful class discussion involves planning on the part of the instructor and preparation on the part of the students. Discussion implies involvement. Ideally, the students and the instructor collaborate to meet mutual goals. Balogun (1981) commented that one of the best ways of helping people to understand and learn from ideas is to give them the opportunity to talk

about them. When people talk, they can really find out how much or little they know. It is then that they can begin to ask the sort of questions that relate directly to ideas and can appreciate what these ideas mean to them and others. Ememem (1988) further added that in this method, children discuss what they know about the given topic, and this method suits subjects like history and debate after reading has been done. In line with this discussion method, Eddie in Ekanem (2004) gives his opinion that, in a way, discussion implies the participation of pupils in the process of learning by raising issues of their own, contributing ideas, asking questions, and seeking solutions based upon the study and drawing conclusion under the teacher's guidance.

Methodology

The research design for this study is an experimental type. The area of this study was within the confines of the California. The population of the study consists of all social studies teachers and high school students in California. The respondents in the study consisted of 12 social studies teachers and 240 students. These were obtained through the simple random sampling method, which was used in randomly selecting 2 teachers and 40 students from each of the 6 schools selected for use in the study. The researcher will develop one instrument tagged " Teaching Methods and Academic Performance Inventory" (TMAPI). The instrument was face and contents validated, which was done by the researcher's supervisor. One expert from test, measurement, and evaluation also helped in validating the instrument. A Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument (TMAPI), using 30 respondents who did not form part of the main study were randomly selected and the instrument administered to them. Data collected from the respondents was subjected to a reliability test, and it produced a reliability coefficient of 0.84 to 0.94.

Results

Research Question one

The research question sought to find out the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies taught using lecture or discussion method. To answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data (see table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with lecture or discussion method.

Group	N	X	Mean Difference	Remarks
Discussion method	60	74.40**	30.60	*Remarkable Difference
Lecture method	60	43.80*		

** The highest mean score

* The least mean score

Source: Field Survey

The result of the above table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught

using discussion or lecture method. From the result of the analysis it was observed that the level of students who were taught using discussion method (74.40) was remarkably higher than that of the student taught using lecture method (43.80) with remarkable mean difference of (30.60***). The result therefore means that there is remarkable difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with discussion or lecture method.

Research Question Two

The research question sought to find out the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught using field trip or discussion method. To answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data (see table 2)

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with discussion or field trip method

Group	N	X	Mean Difference	Remarks
Discussion method	60	74.40**	11.40	*Remarkable Difference
Lecture method	60	63.00*		

** The highest mean score

* The least mean score

Source: Field Survey

The result of the above table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of the difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught using field trip or discussion method. From the result of the analysis it was observed that the level of students who were taught with discussion method (74.40) was remarkably higher than that of the student taught with field trip method (63.00) with remarkable mean difference of (11.40***). The result therefore means that there is remarkable difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught using field trip or discussion method.

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with lecture or discussion method. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as follows:

1. Teaching method (lecture or discussion) as the independent variables
2. Academic performance as the dependent variables

Independent t-test analysis was used in comparing the two independent variables (See table 3).

Table 3: Independent t-test Analysis of the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with lecture or discussion method

Groups	N	X	SD	t
Discussion Method	60	74.80	4.26	29.95*
Lecture Method	60	43.80	6.67	

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =118; N =120; critical t value = 1.96**

The above table 4.5 presents the obtained t-value as (29.95). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 levels with 118 degree of freedom. The obtained t-value (26.95) was greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with lecture or discussion method.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with field trip or discussion method. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as follows:

1. Teaching method (field trip or discussion) as the independent variables.
2. Academic performance as the dependent variables.

Independent t-test analysis was used in comparing the two independent variables (See table 4).

Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis of the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with field trip or discussion method

Groups	N	X	SD	t
Discussion method	60	74.40	4.26	19.46*
Field trip method	60	63.00	1.56	

***Significant at 0.05 level; df = 118; N = 120; Critical t value = 1.96**

The above Table 4.6 presents the obtained t –value as (19.46). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 levels with 118 degree of freedom. The obtained t-value (19.46*) was greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with field trip or discussion method.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the data analysis in table 4.5 was significant due to the fact that the obtained t-value (29.95) was greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level with (118) degree of freedom. This result implies that the result therefore means that there is significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in

social studies when taught with lecture or discussion method. The result is in consonance with the research findings of Ekanem (2004) who further explains that the lecture method to a very large extent is the traditional method of teaching adults. It is autocratic in form and style. Superficially, it might seem that lecture is the easiest teaching strategy to describe and define since the lectures' role is apparently to transmit information, also the findings of William Ewens in Goldsmid and Wilson (1980), who defined the term "discussion" as a diverse body of teaching techniques which emphasize participation, dialogue, and two-way communication. The discussion method is one in which the instructor and a group of students consider a topic, issue, or problem and exchange information, experience, ideas, opinions, reactions, and conclusions with one another. There are a variety of ways to stimulate discussion. The use of discussion method is to make students formulate applications of abstract principles, gain practice in logic and thinking, give prompt feedback, and develop an appetite for further learning compared with the traditional lecture method. Discussion elicits higher levels of reflective thinking and creative problem solving, including synthesis, application, and evaluation. Obviously, a successful class discussion involves planning on the part of the instructor and preparation on the part of the students. The result of the analysis caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

The result of the data analysis in table 4.6 was significant due to the fact that the obtained t-value (19.46) was greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level with (118) degree of freedom. This result implies that the result therefore means that there is significant difference in the academic performance of high school students in social studies when taught with field trip or discussion method. The result therefore agrees with the research findings of Ekanem (2004), who stated that it is an excursion taken outside the classroom for the purpose of making relevant observation for the purpose of obtaining some specific information. He further observes that if properly planned, it affords the students opportunity to become actively engaged in observing, studying relationships, and manipulating objects. This also agrees with the opinion of Balogun (1981), who commented that one of the best ways of helping people to understand and learn ideas is to give them the opportunity to talk about them. It is when people talk that they can really find out how much or little they know. It is then that they can begin to ask the sort of questions that relates directly to ideas and can appreciate what these ideas mean to them and others. The result of the analysis caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

Conclusion

The study concluded that education is the most significant treasure that society requires to deal with its changing nature. The teaching of students at school is so methodical that the proper procedures are followed in order to achieve the anticipated goals. However, the teacher's competence includes the following: an understanding of learners' developmental and learning problems; classroom management; adequate knowledge of the subject matter and curriculum goals; use of instructional methods, techniques, and materials; improvement of instructional strategies to meet the changing demands of learners for occupational knowledge and efficiency; and citizenship preparation.

Recommendations

1. Students should be encouraged to make personal discovery by being exposed to discovery method of teaching.
2. Appropriate teaching strategies should be adopted by teachers in teaching the students in order to motivate them for higher performance.

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